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Mr. Anacharsis Cloots?

THE
SENTIMENTS
OF
A MEMBER of the JACOBINS, in
FRANCE.

SENTINEL

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A MEMBER OF THE JACOBITE

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THE
SENTIMENTS

OF

A MEMBER of the JACOBINS, in

F R A N C E,

UPON

The RELIGION of REASON and NATURE,

Carefully translated from the original Manuscript,

COMMUNICATED BY THE AUTHOR;

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR MACHILL STACE,

NO. 11, HAYMARKET.

1792.

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Oct 21, 1939

A MEMBER OF THE JACOBUS

1840

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THE RELIGION & ETHICS OF THE FUTURE

Carefully transcribed from the original Manuscript

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NO. 11, HAYMARKET

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

AMONGST the multitude of schemes and projects with which France has lately abounded, the following system of religion appeared to many people in Paris, to deserve the attention of the public. It was written by a member of the Jacobins, and communicated by him to many of his friends, amongst whom, there were not a few of the present clergy, who have taken the oaths, several members of the Legislature, and particularly, many members of the Jacobins. It was much debated amongst them, whether the manuscript should be published, avowed by the author, and sup-

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ported and inculcated by his friends, or whether it should be suffered to sleep until a more favourable opportunity. It was urged on the one hand, that it became men, in an enlightened age, to speak their minds openly, clearly, and loudly; that every man of understanding and letters, in Europe, had already taught this religion indirectly in his works, and that mankind were now ripe to hear truth told them directly, in plain language; that it was the more necessary at present, since France was torn by factions, amongst whom, by far the most dangerous, were the non-juring clergy, who, without any religion of their own, made use of the prejudices and profound ignorance of the peasants, to obtain an empire over them, and mislead them. On the other hand, it was contended, that the effervescence occasioned by the late revolution, was already much too great; that many of the best friends to the constitution wished to see it subside; that people were fairly tired with the general distrust, uneasiness, and trouble, occasioned by

by the changes, and universally alarmed whenever a new proposal of any kind was made, and the general cry over France was, "No more revolutions!" that nothing was so apt to agitate mens' minds, as religious opinions; that however ready men of knowledge and learning might be to receive this religion, the multitude, consisting of ignorant people and fanatics, were, by no means, ripe for a system which represented their prejudices as sins against the Deity. Some disapproved of the work, as pretending to teach them something new, while the whole matter and reasoning in it was perfectly common and trite to every person who thought liberally on such subjects. These persons generally thought, that the proper way to attack ancient prejudices, was by indirectly stating new matter, which would set the thoughts of men at work, and not by openly resisting these prejudices: they approved of the method of Voltaire and Rousseau, Hume, and Gibbon, rather than that of Bolingbroke and their friend. They

said, that in the first case, truth insinuates itself into the heart, by making the reader believe it to be his own discovery; while the direct method revolts his feelings, and sets him upon discovering arguments to answer what he conceives to be dangerous opinions. Others were of opinion, that the arguments were too short, and too subtle, to be easily followed by the common run of readers; and with respect to others, it was useless.

The translator having passed a few months last summer in France, and having some acquaintance with the author, easily persuaded him to communicate to him his manuscript: he found him much perplexed with the opposite opinions he had received from his friends, and strongly inclined to suppress his work, when a middle course was suggested to him; namely, that he should publish it in a foreign country, and in a foreign language; by this means most of the objections to it would be removed; and accordingly as it was well or ill received in France,

France, and other countries, the author should afterwards avow it, by publishing the original with his name, or suppress it altogether. The writer of this readily undertook to translate it into English, and publish it in England, which he was permitted to do, under the most express promise, that he would conceal the author's name until he should receive his permission to declare it. He now submits it to the public, as it was communicated to him; and happy shall he be, if by the favorable reception it may receive, the author shall be induced to avow it, by publishing the original work, corrected and enlarged, as it no doubt must be, by further consideration. He hopes there is nothing contained in it which can give offence to any pious well-disposed mind; and with respect to those who make a pretence of religion, to mislead and domineer over men, he has long held their opinion in the most sovereign contempt.

The translator is strongly persuaded that the public will find something original in
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this system of religion ; that it has a foundation in nature ; and that it will not be confounded with the multitude of new sects with which the world is now infested. He can discover in it no resemblance to the notions of any of them, except to those of the Millenarians, who firmly believe that the time will come, when men will enjoy perfect freedom and happiness, without restraint, under the immediate government of their God and his laws ; and this resemblance, if it can be fairly collected from the performance, however ridiculous it may appear to some, will be excused by a temperate English reader, when he considers that the author is a Frenchman ; that he took an active part in the revolution in that kingdom ; and lastly, that he is a Jacobin. While the tendency of such opinions is to make men better and wiser, the publication of them must be approved by all good men. Happy would it have been for mankind, if the reveries of the multitude of sects with which the world is now over-run, had

had resembled these sentiments; yet all these sects have their partizans: the translator also hopes that this new system will have its partizans; and as he himself is firmly persuaded of the truth of it, that it may spread, that the worship inculcated in it may become general, is his most ardent prayer.

Some readers may possibly suspect that the work was fabricated in England, as it has not yet appeared in the French language. This circumstance is not material in itself, and the translator would rather think himself flattered by it; but he is afraid that those who are well acquainted with the French language, will discover too many gallicisms in it, which have escaped him, to put it in his power to suppress the circumstance of its being a translation: besides, several Englishmen were at Paris when the manuscript was communicated to him, who were acquainted with the author, and to his knowledge have read the manuscript in its original dress. These gentlemen are now called upon to conceal
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the name of the author, as the publication of it might possibly hurt him in his own country. It is this apprehension which has prevented the translator from putting his own name to the translation, that he may not be teased with useless questions, which he is determined not to answer.

IN all ages mankind have believed in superior beings who took an interest and interfered in their affairs. It was a necessary consequence of this belief, to conclude that some particular behaviour and conduct of men was agreeable to these beings, and fitted to procure their assistance and goodwill; and that some other conduct was disagreeable to them, and fitted to produce their resentment and indignation.

Benevolence and resentment are passions which not mankind only are subject to, but the whole animal creation. They seem inseparable from all existence susceptible of pain or pleasure. Mankind have, therefore, freely attributed these passions to those superior beings. Having thus bestowed upon them

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some of the human passions, it was very difficult to avoid attributing to them others: they have accordingly attributed to them most or all of the human passions.

These beings have generally been conceived not to resemble men in this: that they were never seen, heard, or felt, except in particular instances. Their abode was supposed to be at a distance from us, in heaven: and as the instances of their appearance to men were not very well attested, they were known chiefly from the effects which they produced. As these effects were much beyond the strength of man, or of the animal creation to produce, they must necessarily attribute to them, as in fact they did, infinitely more power. In every other respect the Gods of the earth have at all times been mere men, acting in the same manner, and endued with the same passions, good and bad. It has been said that "God formed man after his own image:" the reverse of the proposition is true—that men formed the Gods after their image; nor was it possible for them to form them after any other.

Men

Men were desirous of painting their gods as perfect as possible. Perfection is a mere relative term: things are perfect only as they are applicable to the purposes for which they are intended. Man knowing his own purposes and not the purposes of beings of a different nature, if he shall ascribe purposes to the Gods, must necessarily ascribe to them his own purposes. He thinks these the best possible in nature; because they are in fact the best for him in his situation. The organization, the passions, the virtues of men, are certainly the best adapted, consequently the most perfect of any thing in nature that we are acquainted with to answer our purposes. If, therefore, men shall be so presumptuous as to paint to their imaginations superior beings who were never subjected to their senses, they must necessarily paint them men.

We accordingly find the Gods, as described by different people, professing the different religions of the earth, vulgar and contemptible in proportion to the barbarity

of the age in which those religions were established, and rising in sublimity in proportion to the degree of philosophical and moral knowledge which prevailed. The Gods are described, in the different religions of the earth, as men are formed in the different periods of society. Perhaps there is not a more certain method of judging with tolerable accuracy of the manners, character, philosophical and moral knowledge of men in the different ages of the world, than by considering attentively their different religions.

This universal assent of mankind to the existence of a God or Gods of some kind or other, has been considered by many ingenious men as a proof of the existence of one God, Creator, Preserver, and Superintender of the Universe. But this argument seems to have little weight, when we consider that the Gods of most of the religions of the earth have as little connection with the idea of a Supreme God, Creator and Preserver of the Universe, as have the devils in Milton, the genii of eastern nations, or the fairies of our ancestors; a set of beings
equally

equally superior to us in power, but equally subjected to all the human passions, and in subjection to these passions; perpetually counteracting the operations of nature, and the best established principles of moral rectitude. The belief of the existence of such Gods, is surely more pernicious to mankind than the absolute disbelief of the existence of any God. Gods who are supposed frequently to counteract their own natural laws, which they have established for the government of the world, and the moral laws which they have imprinted in every good man's mind for the regulation of his conduct, are tyrants which men had better want, for the same reason that men had better want government than be subject to the will of capricious rulers, who feel themselves bound by no law which can be known to those whom they govern.

The primary notions of mankind with respect to the gods seem to have arisen from a principle implanted in us by nature for our preservation, which is fear. We are afraid of every thing we are not accustomed to see, if we have not already seen something

something analagous to it. This principle is strong in proportion to our weakness and ignorance. It has the greatest effect upon us in extreme youth, and seems gradually to lose its force with age and knowledge.

This natural fear is evidently the origin of fairies, ghosts, and apparitions; and most probably of the very absurd notions which mankind have entertained in all ages of gods and devils. Men were afraid, and they knew not of what. It was evidently something that was not visible, for they saw nothing. They must have concluded it had pernicious qualities, and a power of hurting them, or they would not have been afraid. Thus they first conceived invisible, wicked beings to be the cause of their fear. In their transactions in life they met with misfortunes for which they could not account. It was most natural for them to attribute these misfortunes to those invisible beings, the objects of their fear. Having thus conceived they had discovered malignant spirits the transition was easy to good spirits. Some men felt themselves in happier

pier situations than others: all men met
 many circumstances in life which were
 agreeable to them, without knowing to
 what to attribute their good fortune. It
 was most natural for them to attribute
 their happiness to good beings, to whom
 they bore gratitude in proportion to their
 happiness. They found different ranks in
 society amongst men; they supposed, there-
 fore, the same distinction amongst gods.
 Thus the world became peopled with
 fairies, apparitions, genii, gods, angels, and
 devils.

This account of these fictitious beings
 seems the more probable, as times of the
 greatest ignorance have always been the
 times of the greatest superstition, and su-
 perstition has always prevailed the most
 amongst the vulgar. When men are igno-
 rant, and observe uncommon phænomena,
 which they are not able to explain, or meet
 with good or bad fortune which they can-
 not account for; they must ascribe it to
 some supernatural cause, the immediate
 interference of gods or devils, or of their
 agents. Whereas men of experience and
 reflection

reflection find as much cause for wonder and admiration in the most common occurrences in life, as in the most uncommon. In a stone falling to the ground, or a candle burning in its socket, as in tempests, whirlwinds, and earthquakes. They have observed some general laws in the operations of nature which prevail universally, and which have enabled them to explain some uncommon phænomena; and they conclude with much appearance of truth, that a more perfect acquaintance with the laws of nature would enable them to explain other phænomena. It is not many years ago that a man who possessed the ordinary acquirements of the present day would have been taken for a wizard, and, perhaps, burnt at a stake. Friar Bacon was supposed to have sold himself to the devil. The mathematicians who went to measure a degree of the meridian at the equator were taken for forcerers. In these days, when we see a man perform any wonderful thing, we conclude, that he understands some principle of the general laws of nature with which

which we are unacquainted, and we have never been deceived.

But whatever was the origin of the numerous fantastic religions which we find established in the world, certain it is, they all bear the marks of considerable antiquity, barbarism and ignorance. The gods of the earth are not only men with the passions and virtues which are universally perceived in all periods of society, but they possess the vices which disgrace men, and which could only have been attributed to them through extreme ignorance. They love flattery and adoration; they are delighted with solicitation and prayer; they are moved to alter their own will at the desire and entreaties of men; they are generally partial to some chosen people, and consequently unjust to the rest of mankind; they have all been represented as jealous, susceptible of anger and resentment, as receiving favours and services from men, for which they were grateful; as desiring gifts and sacrifices; for, although the sacrifice of living animals has been abolished in several of the modern religions, yet other

sacrifices of a more important nature have constantly been required for the use of their priests and churches, and supposed useful, even essential, for securing the friendship, or appeasing the resentment, of the Deity.

If there be an intelligent being, creator and preserver of the universe, it requires but a moment's reflection to perceive that it is impossible he can possess such attributes. They all imply a degree of weakness and ignorance, inconsistent with the idea of the Creator's power and wisdom.

But what indicates a still greater degree of barbarity than attributing to the Deity the weakness and vices of men is, the supposing him particularly favourable to the poor and ignorant ; pleased with idleness ; with the voluntary mortifications and sufferings of men ; requiring of them to sacrifice to him their reason, that test which he himself had given them for their belief and conduct, and to adopt another test not consistent with it. All which implies a wonderful degree of depravity ; and we might have been assured, if they themselves had not informed us of it, that the authors of such religions,

religions, not only lived in a barbarous age; but, that they were the poorest and most ignorant of the age in which they lived.

In the early ages of the world, as men had eyes, they could not avoid perceiving some of the wonders of the universe. But being absolutely incapable of understanding any of the universal laws, by which it is governed, or carrying their ideas beyond this world or themselves, they supposed every thing was made for their use; and that animals were made for them alone. The multitude of suns and planetary systems which fill the immensity of space, were little stars placed in a firmament above their heads, merely to afford them a small twinkling light, when the sun and moon should be set. Beyond this firmament they placed the rain: the firmament had gates, which were opened, when it pleased their God that the rain should descend. The creation of this world, contemptible as the system appears, in an enlightened age, was an object much too vast for their conceptions: they could form no idea of any power or wisdom sufficient to accomplish it;

but what wisdom and force wanted, they supposed might be supplied by words, which the Creator was acquainted with: they ascribed the same virtue to magical words, which at other times, men have ascribed to magical numbers, and they supposed the world created by these. This absurdity, which seems to be of a very ancient date, pervades the Arabian tales.

“ God said let there be light, and there was light.” This thought and expression, has

been quoted by several considerable writers, as an instance of the true sublime; and certainly it possesses in a surprising degree, one of the greatest characteristics of sublimity, that of striking the mind with astonishment and wonder, and in an age of ignorance, where men could not detect the fallacy of the thought, it may have justly deserved the character of sublimity. The

[apologists for this apparent absurdity have said, that it was not the virtue of words, which created the world, but the will of the Creator. But this will not answer their purpose, because the mere will, without some active force employed, can produce

duce no effect whatever; even still less than words, for the sound of words may make us stare, and sometimes tremble.

If mankind in all ages have professed some religion or other: if the profession of some religion has always been considered as useful to man, and for the benefit of society; and if all the religions, which we now find established in the world, are absurd and contradictory, the mere effects of fear, gratitude and admiration, upon ignorance and superstition; it becomes man, in a comparatively free and enlightened age, to consider attentively, whether some principles of revealed religion, which may be useful to society, may not be discovered by a fair use of our faculties; and if we shall be so happy as to succeed in this, we shall avoid the common objection urged against free-thinkers, that they attempt to destroy a considerable lien upon mankind, whose object is to check injustice, without substituting any thing in place of it, or which can possibly answer the same purpose.

In considering a matter of this importance, it is absolutely necessary that we should

should not proceed too hastily; but taking
 example from the rashness of our predecessors
avoid building systems, which the first new
 discoveries in the laws of nature will over-
 set. Too happy, if by proceeding cautiously,
 and divesting ourselves of all prejudices
 arising from our education, our habits and
 our interest, we shall be able to establish a
 few certain truths, which shall stand the
 test of all future examination. By the disco-
 very of a solid foundation for revealed re-
 ligion, we cannot avoid deriving imme-
 diately the most important advantages, and
 we may leave with confidence to our pos-
 terity the further prosecution of the sub-
 ject, who, we may be assured, will make
 further discoveries in proportion to their at-
 tentive observation of the laws of nature,
 and the acuteness of their reasoning facul-
 ties. And who shall presume to say, how
 far the human faculties may be improved;
 or whether the few principles of religion,
 which we shall endeavour to establish, may
 not be extended hereafter, as much be-
 yond our present ideas, as our present
 physical knowledge, acquired by slow ex-
 periments

periments and continued discussion, exceeds the more presumptuous pretensions of our ancestors to physical knowledge founded upon uncertain abstract metaphysical reasonings.

The connection between religion and physical knowledge is obvious: for we may be certain, that if ever we arrive at any acquaintance with the nature of God, or his attributes, it can only be by a careful observation of the laws which he follows, in conducting and governing his works: nor need we be apprehensive that the few principles of religion, which we shall be able to establish with certainty, will be insufficient for the purposes of society. There is no useful purpose in life that can be answered by our being deceived, or believing what does not exist; on the contrary, the most pernicious consequences may frequently result from it. A due sense of ignorance is the next advantageous situation of man, to the absolute knowledge of the truth. The man who knows with certainty the stability of his fortune, his friends, and his resources, is perfectly safe from ruin. If he is to go a voyage, and knows
well

well that he has a good ship, an intelligent pilot, and a favourable season, he may proceed with a considerable degree of security. If he has a due sense of his ignorance of any of these, he will necessarily proceed with proportionate caution and circumspection, and may probably by these means, escape the dangers to which he would otherwise be exposed. But the man who is absolutely deceived in any of these things, proceeds indeed without fear, and with confidence, but it is to his certain destruction.

It has frequently been observed, and is well worthy of remark, that the good things of this world which are the most useful to us, are the most common; and the knowledge which is of the most importance to us is the most easily acquired. We are happily so constructed, that the knowledge which is absolutely necessary for our existence is not left to the slow operation of observation and reasoning, but seems to have been communicated to us by another principle which we call instinct. Reasoning therefore by analogy, we may conclude that if it was absolutely necessary for us to
know

know any thing relating to the attributes of God, it would have been communicated to us by a similar instinct, and that we have faculties for acquiring such knowledge with a facility and a degree of certainty in proportion as it is of use to us.

The essence of all *revealed* religion seems to consist in the belief of a God or Gods, of some description or other; who have ministers, servants, or angels to attend and serve them, and execute their commands; in the belief of some creed; in the performance of some acts or ceremonies which are supposed peculiarly agreeable to the Gods or their servants, which is called worship: and lastly, in abstaining from other acts and ceremonies, which are supposed disagreeable to them, which is called sin. By ceremonies is strictly meant acts which lead to no important consequence, but which are performed merely from ancient habit; and therefore devotees will not allow their different acts of religious worship, such as prayer, baptism, genuflection, &c. to be ceremonies; but this is a dispute upon words.

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The resurrection of the dead, and future rewards and punishments, are certainly not essential to revealed religion, as many religions have subsisted without a belief in these. Nor do even the principles of morality seem to constitute any essential part of revealed religion; for although some liberal-minded professors have represented these principles in modern times, as the most essential part of revealed religion, yet others have considered our moral principles depending upon the truth and justice of human reason, as inferior principles, which ought always to be subservient to the express commands of God, supposed to be taught by revelation. The principles of morality seem to have been engrafted upon most of the religions now in the world, since their original institution, and to have formed no part of it. Where the original books of religion treat of moral subjects, they treat of them so obscurely and inaccurately, that divines are perpetually obliged to explain them away from their obvious meaning, to render them consistent with common sense, and the feelings of mankind.

It

It is therefore well worthy our utmost attention and enquiry to determine whether there is any foundation in nature for these universal principles which pervade all revealed religion, and which have been considered by men in all ages as useful to them, and necessary for the preservation and improvement of society; and if we shall succeed in demonstrating, 1st. That there is a God, creator of the universe. 2dly. That he has employed ministers or servants under him, to execute his will in the preservation of the universe. 3dly. That there is a particular system of belief and some particular actions of men which are agreeable to God, and others disagreeable to him, answering to the most exact definition of a creed, worship, and sin, and to which God has affixed rewards and punishments. And lastly, If we shall be able to give even a general outline of what that creed, that worship, and that sin is; and how we are to proceed to discover them more correctly, we shall have established a solid foundation for religion, answering in

all its parts to the essential principles of revealed religion, which we may rely upon as all that is absolutely necessary for us at this moment; leaving that foundation to be built upon solely by our wiser posterity, as mankind shall improve in their observations and reasoning faculties.

1. First, we are certain, equal to the certainty of our own existence, that there is a supreme God, creator of the universe. In stating this proposition, it is absolutely necessary that it should be understood, that we mean to confine our enquiries merely to the abstract proposition, and shall not presume to ascribe attributes of any kind to God, either physical or moral, still less to discuss the metaphysical questions concerning matter and spirit; or pretend to determine the essence or substance of God, or of the universe; or how he created the world. These are questions much beyond the reach of our faculties, in their present imperfect state. It is impossible we should form any conception of them, resembling truth. The author of nature must necessarily be extremely different from every thing we
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are acquainted with : our ideas can never reach beyond our own faculties, which are limited on every side ; nor can we form any ideas of nature, or of the author of nature, beyond our own experience. }

Our observing faculties, as given us by the author of nature, were still more imperfect than they now are ; we therefore know, that he has given us a power of improving them in a certain degree : we have exercised this power in every discovery we have made ; and particularly by the discovery of the microscope and telescope, we have extended our views to new worlds, which otherwise must have remained unknown to us, from their immensity or their minuteness. Our reasoning faculties have also been improved, and the subtle and certain reasonings of mathematicians, which are even now beyond the capacity of children, or people of weak intellects, must have been altogether incomprehensible in an early period of society. But still, all the faculties of man are extremely confined, and we know with certainty, that there is yet room for vast improvement,

ment, from the wonderful disproportion of these faculties in men and animals. To what extent they may be improved it is impossible we should know. It is therefore absolutely necessary, that in considering the evidence of a God, or power, creator of the universe, we should divest ourselves of all ideas of attributes which we usually connect with the name of God, when we hear that word pronounced, in consequence of the prejudices we have imbibed with our religious education.

To perceive the certainty of the proposition, that there is a God, author, or creator of the universe, it is barely necessary that we should consider attentively, what we mean by the words God, Author, Creator, Universe. Man feels himself placed in the midst of an immense world, surrounded with a multitude of objects, which his faculties are only capable of perceiving gradually, and as he attends to them separately; all of them continually acting upon him more or less, and he in return, acting upon them, sometimes voluntarily, and sometimes involuntarily, according to cer-
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tain laws which we call the laws of nature. The aggregation of all these bodies, of which we compose a part, is evidently what we mean by the universe. As men advance in knowledge, they soon perceive, with the same certainty that they perceive their own existence, that all they know of the universe, is derived merely from their senses or faculties of perception, together with another faculty we are possessed of in a greater or less degree, of recollecting former sensations and ideas, and a power of comparing, combining, abstracting, and drawing conclusions from these sensations and ideas: that all our knowledge of the infinite variety of objects, from the most distant fixed star, to the smallest particle of matter; of animated beings, from a man to an oyster, is, and ever will be confined to these sensations, ideas, and reasonings. When we speak therefore of ourselves, or any other part of the universe, we speak only of different feelings which pass in our minds, which may, or may not resemble external objects; and it is perfectly indifferent to us whether they do, or do not; they

they must necessarily always produce the same effects upon us; these effects we know and cannot be deceived in, and the whole of these feelings, which we either have, or may have in proper situations, is what we mean by the universe.

We feel, with the same certainty that we feel our own existence, that these sensations are created by something external of ourselves which we call matter. What that matter is, or what are its properties, independent of us, it is impossible for us ever to know; or whether the whole or any of its properties resemble the sensations we feel. Certain it is, we mean by matter, by external and internal objects, by the universe, those feelings only; and the primary external cause of those feelings is the creator of that matter, the author and creator of the universe, that is God.

In treating the proof of the existence of God we have purposely avoided all questions relating to the existence of matter, as not being of the least importance to the subject. Whether matter does or does not

not exist, such as we conceive it, is perfectly immaterial to us; we never can know it but by the effect which it produces upon our feelings, and that effect is the same and equally certain whether matter exists or not. The beauty of the whole system is equally admirable; every science is equally true; every art is equally useful: it is equally essential for our life, health, and happiness, that we should conduct ourselves in the proper way to promote these. Certain it is, that the only universe we know or ever shall know, is the aggregation of our own feelings: if any other systems subsist, they are, and ever must remain unknown to us, unless the author of our existence shall give us new senses and new faculties to perceive them. We are certain, that these feelings are produced in us by some foreign cause, primary or secondary: if a secondary cause has been employed, such as we conceive matter to be, there necessarily must have been a primary cause, and that primary cause all mankind are agreed to call God.

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Having

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Having thus demonstrated the existence of a God, author, or creator of the universe, we may next enquire, as an important question in religion, whether our faculties will enable us to discover, if that God has always acted in the formation, and preservation of the universe, by the immediate influence of his own power; or whether he has generally employed ministers and servants under him to execute his will, according to certain powers which he has given them; and who these servants are. 2d. These questions, however abstruse they appear on the first examination, are certainly susceptible of a clear and satisfactory answer, which we shall endeavour to give; and if we shall succeed in demonstrating the existence of such ministers and servants, the powers which God has given them, and the laws by which they are limited and restrained; we shall have established some very important points of religion.

Man after his birth first perceives himself placed in an immense world, surrounded with a multitude of objects, without per-

perceiving their immediate connection with himself, how they act upon him, or how in return he acts upon them. As he advances in age and experience, and improves himself by the experience of others, his faculties expand, and he gradually acquires strength, discerning, and reasoning faculties, in proportion to the construction of his frame, and the proper exercise he has bestowed on his faculties; he perceives, in many instances, how many of the objects around him act upon him, and the effect they produce, and how in return he may act, and produce some considerable alterations upon them. At last he discovers by the use of telescopes and other improvements, that this world, vast as it is, and all the objects that it comprehends, are but a mere atom compared with the universe; and by the use of microscopes, he discovers that there are other worlds which had escaped the observation of his senses, from their minuteness. When he has got thus far, he must observe, that all this variety of objects are perpetually acting upon one another, and producing

ducing new combinations. That the whole world, and every part of it, so far as they have come under the observation of our senses, are perpetually changing, and that we ourselves do not continue a moment the same. What the world was at its original formation it is impossible for us to know; but we know certainly that it is now extremely different from what it was in former times, as we daily see an alteration upon it: every new combination is a new creation; something is created which did not before exist; something is destroyed which formerly existed. We understand in some degree the cause of these alterations and changes; we feel and are certain that they are partly occasioned by ourselves, and that man is not an unimportant agent in the universe.

It is the succession of these changes, or new combinations which have taken place in the world, that has created things as they now are; it is those that are to follow that must hereafter give the universe the form it will assume. We therefore know
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certainly, that man is a minister or servant of God, employed by him to preserve the universe in order, and that God has intrusted him with certain powers for this purpose which he daily exercises, sometimes properly and sometimes improperly; which powers are limited by his strength, and understanding or knowledge how to employ his own strength and the other powers of nature subjected to him, for answering his purposes. Having gone thus far, we easily discover that man is not the only minister or servant of God; that the combinations which take place with the utmost exertion of his strength and power bear but an infinitely small proportion to the new combinations which take place in the universe; and that the whole animal creation are fellow labourers with him, each in its proper sphere: and he will soon be convinced, that the smallest insect or worm can easily accomplish purposes, which the utmost exertion of his faculties will never attain. We shall discover, that it is not animated nature alone that constitutes the ministers or servants of God; but

but that every part of unanimated matter is equally employed to act its part to answer the Creator's purposes, and is equally intrusted with distinct powers, and subjected to certain laws; and that the whole of these agents acting together is evidently what preserves the universe, as far as it has come within our observation, in its present order.

If therefore, we are to consider ourselves as the ministers or servants of God, employed by him to execute his will, and preserve the universe in order, it is incumbent upon us to study attentively, what part he has allotted to us to act. That part it is our duty to perform: we are certain that the due performance of that duty is agreeable to him, and therefore must be the worship which he requires of us: that the neglect or improper performance of that duty must be disagreeable to God, and therefore sinful. And by attending closely to the powers which God has given us, the faculties with which we are endued, the laws with which we are circumscribed, the pleasure and pain we feel, or rewards
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and punishments which we suffer, in consequence of the different actions we perform; the part which has been allotted to man to act by his Creator, may be discovered with a considerable degree of accuracy.

Of the part which God has allotted to man to act in this world, or the worship which God requires from man.

This subject is evidently very extensive; it comprehends the various duties of man through life, and the various alterations which we ought to make in our conduct from every circumstance that happens to us. But it is not to be expected, that in the present imperfect state of our faculties we should be able to perceive or trace out such extensive duties: the most important of these duties are perhaps the most difficult to be understood, and happy it is for mankind, that the author of nature has not waited for the slow operations of our observing and reasoning faculties to determine us to act those parts. The child applies to the breast; all animals to their proper food; the circulation of the blood, respiration, every
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natural function, every involuntary motion of our bodies are acts which God continually requires of us, and which are absolutely necessary for our existence, but which it is impossible for us to explain or understand. If we shall be able to discover, by our observations and reasoning, a few more obvious parts of our duty, it must in some degree contribute to our happiness in this world, and be agreeable to the author of our existence; and to posterity must be left the happiness which will necessarily result from further discoveries. In the mean time, we may remain perfectly assured, that God will only make us answerable for the proper use of the faculties he has bestowed upon us.

We feel ourselves placed in the midst of an immense world, surrounded with a multitude of objects, every one of which has annexed to it by the author of nature distinct and separate powers of producing certain effects when placed in certain situations. It is evident, therefore, that the Creator, who gave matter such powers, intended

tended they should be exercised, and these effects produced whenever these situations took place. Amongst the multitude of objects which surround us, we discover an infinite variety of animals, which, besides the powers common to the rest of nature, possess all our senses and faculties in different degrees of perfection, from the full enjoyment of them with some degree of reason, to simple sensation; from whence they sink and dwindle away so as hardly to be distinguished from unanimated matter. All these animals seem to be affected with passions and desires, and to be capable of acquiring some degree of knowledge from experience. It is evident therefore, that the author of nature intended that all these animals should be moved to act by their passions, and that these passions should be prompted or restrained by their knowledge and experience. God has given animals a considerable dominion over unanimated matter, that is, of employing the powers of matter for their use and to answer their purposes; he has even given a dominion to animals over one another

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ther in proportion to their strength, and principally according to their knowledge how to apply that strength. It is evident, therefore, that God intended that all these powers should be exercised by the different animals of the creation, as their passions should direct them, governed and restrained by their knowledge and experience: that animals were created for action as inspired by their passions, and restrained by their knowledge; and that it is by the general action of the whole of animated and unanimated nature, that the universe is upheld, so far as we are acquainted with it, in its present order.

Amongst the race of animals man distinguishes his own species eminent above the rest; at first view, he thinks that the author of nature has given him a complete dominion, not only over the whole of unanimated nature, but over the rest of the animal creation; that every thing was made for his use. And certainly the construction of his hands, his erect position, and principally his organs for observing, remembering, comparing, and reasoning, seem

seem to have given him a manifest superiority over the rest of the creation, and appear to favour this presumption. But with a little attention he will discover, that this power over other things is extremely limited in the present state of his knowledge and faculties; that it extends to little more than the power of making some gross alterations in the form of unanimated matter for his conveniency, and in the domestication of a few animals whose lives and strength he can employ for his purposes: that the great works of nature, arising from physical and chemical causes; the effects of heat, of hardness, of motion, of mixtures, and a multitude of other powers in nature, are perpetually going on without his participation or knowledge; that every part of nature is executing the task allotted to it, and every animal and animalcule continually performing its separate duty; and that our ignorance of these powers and operations is frequently the cause of our destruction.

If therefore man, in common with other animals, was created by the author of na-

ture for the purpose of acting his part in the creation, and preservation of the universe, and has had given to him passions and desires to prompt him how he is to act, and a capacity of acquiring knowledge and experience for the purpose of regulating these passions, it is evidently his duty to God, and the worship which he requires of him, to attend closely to these feelings, and compare them continually with his knowledge and experience, and to perform that part which these shall suggest to him. If we are certain of our own existence, we are certain that the different organs of our body, fitted for action, were given us by the author of nature to be used in action: that our passions and desires were given us to prompt that action, and direct us how we should employ it: that our observing faculties, our memory, our reasoning faculties, were given us for the purpose of being used and employed in acquiring knowledge and experience; and that our knowledge and experience was intended by our Creator to quicken or restrain, or give a new direction to our passions and desires.

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We are certain therefore, that working with assiduity, under the government of cultivated and informed reason, is the part which has been allotted to man to act in this world, and the worship which God requires from him.

Man, necessarily acting, with more or less vigour from these principles, thus governed, soon perceives that God has required of him to direct the use of his faculties, first, to the preservation of his own existence: secondly, to procure for himself every thing which can contribute to his happiness and comfort; and with some attention he will perceive, that this last comprehends the comfort and happiness of the whole animal creation, at least so far as they do not impede him in his own more important pursuits.

All men have received the desire of promoting the happiness of every other animal from nature; it is the most perceptible with regard to animals that immediately depend upon us: as our knowledge of them increases, and we can employ them for our own use, the desire to promote their happiness increases
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in proportion ; it diminishes gradually as we are unacquainted with them ; and ceases absolutely, with our ignorance of them. But in no case where we are sensible of the existence of living animals, are we altogether insensible to their comfort and happiness ; unless by experience we know they are pernicious to us, or our ignorance of their character and properties renders us afraid of them.

We derive even a considerable happiness and comfort from the prosperity of unanimated matter. We love to see rich grounds, well-ordered gardens ; and beautiful prospects ; and wish to establish riches, order, and harmony throughout the universe ; and are only prevented by our ignorance and our weakness, from acting in a way to produce this order of things. As our powers of action, and our knowledge of the universe, and the laws by which it is governed, increase, these natural desires increase also, and we become fitter to execute our wishes and the purposes of our existence. Thus, the God of nature has wisely ordered that man, together

together with the rest of the creation, should proceed in his course, and continue to act his purposes, while he conceives he is merely pursuing his own.

In the performance of our labour, to protect our own existence and to render ourselves comfortable and happy, we soon find, that both these objects depend upon a multitude of circumstances, which it requires the utmost exertion of our senses to discover, and of our reasoning faculties to distinguish and ascertain; that even in these days of improvement and knowledge, few of these circumstances can be perceived distinctly and with sufficient certainty. Experience however teaches us, that as our faculties expand with age, and improve with attention and labour properly directed, we perceive these circumstances more and more distinctly: that new worlds of ideas open to us, and we discover with great certainty many means of preserving life in particular cases, and sources of comfort and happiness which were before unknown to us: we also perceive, with greater

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or less distinctness, various other means of promoting both these purposes, and which become new incitements to our industry. We perceive, that our arriving at certainty in questions that we have to examine, depends upon the perfection of our organs of sensation applicable to those questions; and the perfection of our reasoning faculties: that the author of nature has given us a considerable power of improving these faculties by exercise and attention; and by the invention of instruments and tools. We have already mentioned two instances of this kind, the microscope and the telescope. It is therefore the duty of man, and the most important part of the worship which God requires of him, to improve those faculties to the utmost which are immediately connected with his situation in life and pursuits.

We have already observed, that man must necessarily act, and his action be directed by his passions and desires; and these passions and desires must necessarily be governed, that is, augmented or restrained by
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his knowledge and experience. It is evident, that although this order of things is all that is requisite to preserve the universe in its present order, yet man can have no merit with his Creator for acting merely this part, because he does it necessarily; we accordingly receive no reward for it; it neither gives us pleasure nor pain to perform the daily task which we are accustomed to. But if we use some extraordinary efforts of exertion, or some uncommon means, which are productive of uncommon effects, then we derive pleasure or pain in proportion to the benefit we reap, or the injury we suffer. We have no inducement to use uncommon efforts, or to try uncommon means, unless we imagine that some advantage will arise from those efforts, and those means. If we have seen justly, our object will be answered, which is our reward: if we have seen falsely, we shall be disappointed, which is our punishment; and that punishment is exactly proportioned to the importance of the object of our pursuits. We must necessarily see justly or falsely any object in proportion as our or-

gans of sensation are fitted to observe that object, and our reasoning faculties are perfect. We therefore worship God and are rewarded for it; or sin against God and are punished for it, principally according to the perfection of our organs of sensation and reason, applicable to our situations. It is therefore our first duty to God, to apply ourselves diligently to correct the errors of these faculties, and to render them more exact, penetrating, and acute. There is accordingly nothing for which men are so highly rewarded by the Creator, as a considerable relative degree of perfection in these faculties; they find a joy and complacency at their hearts upon every new discovery which they make: and the rest of mankind look up to them as superior beings, who have a right to govern them, and direct all their actions.

As the acuteness and accuracy of our organs of sensation and reason, are only useful so far as they can be applied to our labour, it is also evidently our duty, and an essential part of the worship which God requires

requires of us, to improve our organs fitted for our labour. The delicacy and dexterity of our hands are as useful to us in the performance of our labour, as the sharpness of the sight, or the soundness of our judgment, and the perfection we arrive at is rewarded nearly in the same manner.

Next to the improvement of our faculties connected with our occupations, the author of nature requires of us a due exercise of those faculties in these occupations ; that is, proper assiduity and attention to our labour and employment. It is by this labour we are to perform the part allotted to us in the preservation of the universe. As we are industrious or otherwise, we perform that part more or less perfectly ; as our industry is properly or improperly directed, we contribute more or less to our own happiness, and the happiness of the world in general.

As it is by the due employment of men in their proper occupations, that the arts are made to flourish, and that men, and the universe are to derive the full advantage of these arts, it is evident, that this due employment must depend upon the know-
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ledge and experience of men, of those powers of nature and the laws with which they are circumscribed, which are connected with their employments; and that these arts depend altogether upon these powers and laws, and our success or disappointment upon our knowledge or ignorance of them. It is therefore the duty of man, and a most essential part of the worship which God requires of him, to study well these laws as they are applicable to his employments; to weigh well their certainty and extent, and only to give that degree of credit or belief to them which the proof before him merits.

The powers of nature, and the laws by which these powers are limited and restrained, are the powers and laws of light, of mechanism, of attractions, of mixtures, of electricity, of organization, the laws of sound logic, and a multitude of other powers and laws which are all evidently the laws of God. It is by these that man, together with all nature, is governed and restrained; we cannot move a step but in conformity to these laws; every art which
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man can practise depends upon his knowledge of that system of these laws which are connected with the art. Without some degree of knowledge of these laws the artist cannot practise his art; the more extensive his knowledge is, the more excellent the artist is: the universal practice of all the arts which man shall ever devise, necessarily implies the universal knowledge of all the laws of nature which man shall ever discover.

The knowledge which mankind have acquired of the laws of nature is already very extensive, and the arts which they practise are extremely numerous in proportion to their abilities, and much beyond the capacity of any one man to understand or practise; and yet that knowledge, and these arts, are still very imperfect and defective. Happily, the author of nature has endued us with different talents, suited to the acquisition of different kinds of knowledge, and the practice of different arts: he has wisely ordained, that men shall best fulfil their duty of preserving
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the small part of the universe allotted to their care, by dividing their labour, and occupying themselves in different arts, according to their talents. It is therefore the duty of every man to endeavour to discover what his peculiar talents are; what sciences his talents are the best adapted to understand; what arts he is the best fitted to practise; what will be the most useful to him, and best answer the great purposes of his existence; and to apply himself chiefly to these; and thus, by dividing the science and arts of the universe, mankind will arrive at the greatest degree of perfection possible.

It is evident, that this distribution of things according to the best of our capacity, and most diligent and accurate inquiry, is the best suited for the preservation of the lives of mankind; for the rendering them comfortable and happy; and for the preservation of the world in prosperity and order. As our powers increase in proportion to our acquisition of knowledge, and our improvement of arts, we thereby render
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the world more dependent upon us. We become aware of the dangerous qualities of animals and other things, and provided with guards against them, and thereby lose our fear of them; we discover their useful qualities and how to employ them, and gradually take an interest in their preservation, prosperity, and happiness, in proportion to their use; and by these means promote the happiness and comfort of the universe.

Man, in his passage through life, has a thousand wants and desires, and it is absolutely necessary for his existence that many of them should in some degree be gratified. In a state of solitude, without the assistance of society, he must absolutely provide himself with all necessary gratifications or die: he must therefore of necessity employ himself in a multitude of different ways, and after all, he must learn to limit his wants; and the wants which he supplies must of necessity be supplied very imperfectly. But when he comes into society, he soon perceives that most of these wants can be supplied by the labour

labour of others much better than he could have supplied them himself; and that by directing his labour to the objects, best suited to his faculties, he can exchange the creations of his labour, for a larger proportion of the labour of others, than he could have produced in the same time. He thus applies himself principally to some particular art, which he calls his business or profession. But notwithstanding this, the real business of man is extremely diversified, and he must necessarily employ himself in a multitude of different arts: he has an infinite number of wants to supply, many of which he requires at the instant: and the labour and time lost in searching for others who would be able and willing to supply them, without reckoning the price he must pay, would be more than the labour and time he would bestow to supply himself.

Man must therefore necessarily have various occupations, and it is his duty to his Creator to employ more or less of his time in these occupations, in proportion to the necessity arising from the situation and circumstances

cumstances in which he is placed, and in proportion to his talents; it is his duty to cultivate and improve his faculties employed in these occupations in proportion to their utility; and to cultivate and understand the sciences, or laws of nature upon which these occupations depend, in proportion to their importance in these occupations. It is this due proportioning of our time and labour to what ought to be our various employments, that we mean by applying our labour properly: every other distribution of it is a loss of labour, and so far is an injury to the world, and a sin against God.

Besides the great duty of man, of providing, either by his own labour, or the exchange of his labour, the various necessities which he wants for his subsistence, in as great abundance and as great perfection as his abilities are capable of procuring; there is another duty which his Creator requires of him. We have all received senses, memory, reasoning faculties; all these are more or less useful to us in every occupation in life; but independently of the

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use we derive from them, they are so connected with the whole machine of our bodies, that if any of them should be destroyed or suffer an injury, our bodies would be disordered : it is therefore our duty to preserve them all in some degree of perfection, that is, not only in proportion to the use we are to make of them, but also so far as shall be necessary for our general health. They all require exercise, repose, amusement; it is therefore our duty to bestow these upon them, in the proportions which our constitutions demand. In the proper exercise of our senses and faculties, we necessarily employ them in the way which is the most agreeable to us; and most of the pleasures of life, unconnected with business, are derived from this source : the eye sees pleasing objects, the ear is gratified, and the mind is informed.

Notwithstanding all the senses and faculties of man are useful in every employment, it is evident that all employments do not require the same degree of perfection in every sense and faculty. The watchmaker and miniature painter, require a most accurate microscopic eye; a good musician
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requires a most delicate ear and touch ; and a politician or philosopher ought to possess a sound, penetrating, logical head. The author of nature having bestowed these faculties upon men in different proportions, it becomes their duty to choose their principal employments, best suited to them ; and only to employ themselves otherwise, in the exercise of their faculties for health, or to supply their little wants, which they shall find it by experience more advantageous to supply themselves than by the labour of others. If they shall employ themselves in any other proportion, it evidently produces the same effect in the world with idleness. The painter who should employ his time in acquiring the art and science of music ; the mechanic who should study poetry ; the prince or sovereign who should employ himself in lock making, or button making ; otherwise than as exercises of their faculties, or as recreations which they had found necessary by experience, to give a spring and energy to the faculties connected with their necessary employments ; would

evidently be idle, and losing their time as much as if they were asleep,

If therefore it is the duty of men to employ themselves in different ways, suited to their talents and situation; to cultivate all their talents, but in a greater or less degree in proportion as they are useful in their various occupations; to study all the laws of nature in general, but more or less those that are immediately connected with their employments, and in proportion to that connection: A most important question arises, how are we to discover those proportions? For this purpose all our faculties are useful to us; our sight, our hearing, our memory, our knowledge of the laws of nature, the information of others; and all the ideas which these raise in our mind, must be compared together, with the utmost attention we are capable of; and if we are sufficiently attentive and cautious, our reason will surely suggest to us, the arts which we ought to practise, the talents and faculties we ought to cultivate, and the sciences we ought to study, and how far we ought

ought to employ ourselves in these different occupations.

If we are certain of any thing, we are certain that the God of nature has given us the use of reason to direct us in our conduct, and to distinguish between truth and falsehood with the most absolute certainty in some cases, and to compare and weigh probabilities in all other instances; and that he has required of us to believe or disbelieve according to the weight of the evidence, in the scale of reason. In the present state of our knowledge, there are but few truths of which we are absolutely certain; there are many others, of which we have such evidence as will induce any wise man to act upon them without hesitation; and there is an infinite number of other truths, which we either do not perceive at all, or perceive so obscurely and indistinctly, that every wise man will hesitate, and weigh well the consequences before he determines to act from them. The consequence of being deceived, must be the failure of his projects, and the inconveniencies which will result to himself
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and others from such failure. If these inconveniences are inconsiderable, he ought to try his projects the more boldly; if they are great, he ought to proceed with more diffidence. In all cases of doubt, we ought to ascertain the truth by trials and small experiments, at as little expence, and with as little inconveniency as possible; and with the light we shall obtain from such experiments, we may and ought afterwards to proceed with more or less confidence.

It is evident therefore, that our discovering the due proportion in which we ought to employ our time and labour at our respective occupations, must depend upon the accuracy of our judgments. That the accuracy of our judgments must again depend upon our knowledge of the accuracy and justness of our senses and faculties, from which we form our judgments, and how far we may trust and rely upon them. And this again must depend upon our having given due and proper weight to the different arguments with which we are acquainted concerning the justness and accuracy of those faculties. We do this when
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we look broadly with an equal and impartial eye, divested of all prejudices arising from our education, or our wishes, upon the whole of those arguments; after which we cannot avoid believing or disbelieving, according to the weight of that evidence, and of acting with a certain degree of confidence or caution in proportion to that belief.

Man has certainly received from nature, the power of divesting himself in a great measure of the prejudices which he imbibes with his education, or which arise from his wishes; of distinguishing between what he believed formerly, and what he now knows; between what he wishes to be true because it is his interest, and what is truth: he has received the power of weighing the arguments which present themselves in every question which he has occasion to examine, with a considerable degree of justice, and of giving that weight to them which these arguments merit. It seems to be in the more or less extensive exercise of these powers that man derives more or less merit with the Deity, and that he is rewarded or punished

punished accordingly : it is by the exercise of these powers that we discover truth and falsehood ; that we direct our labour properly ; that we distinguish our present interest, our future interest, and the extent of these ; that we distinguish our moral duties to ourselves and others ; and we are rewarded for our exertion with more or less agreeable sensations, exactly proportioned to our respective merits. To observe how nicely the author of the universe has rewarded the merit of mankind in proportion to that merit, let us attend only to the pleasure we feel from the discovery of any truth : that this is exactly proportioned to its certainty, to its utility, to its importance to us, to the ingenuity which led to the discovery, to the acuteness, industry, and labour, which we employed. Each of these circumstances produce distinct sensations in our minds, proportionally agreeable according to the merit of the discovery.

Some moral writers have considered the rules of morality as the laws of God, for the due performance of which we are responsible to him, and for which we must necessarily

necessarily be rewarded or punished. On the contrary, most writers upon revealed religion have considered the duties of morality as an inferior principle, which ought to give way upon all occasions to other laws immediately communicated to us by the Deity ; in the religion of the Jews, God commanded Saul to hew Agag in pieces, contrary to every principle of humanity and morality. Both these opinions, so extremely different, seem to have some foundation in nature, although the last comes nearest to the truth ; and the only error that has been committed by the different writers on revealed religion is, in not ascertaining, with sufficient proof, what communications or laws were made by the Deity ; and in imposing upon us mens inventions for the laws of God. If a system of law for the belief and conduct of men had been clearly and certainly communicated by our common author, our systems of morality, depending upon our weak, and limited understandings, which are incapable of perceiving more than

one object distinctly at a time, whereas every moral duty depends upon a thousand objects, must, and ought to give way to these laws.

According to the system of religion we have been endeavouring to establish, the powers of nature and the laws with which these powers are circumscribed, the laws of physics, are the laws of God, which it is our duty to study; gradually as we discover them, we perceive their connection, their uniformity, their sublimity, and how worthy they are of their author. These are certainly the laws of God, some of which only have been revealed to us through the organs he has bestowed upon us; hereafter we may expect with patience and industry to arrive at a more extensive knowledge of them. Our actions are limited and bound by these laws, and the slightest inspection will convince us, that our moral conduct ought to be governed and directed by them. Our social and selfish, our benevolent and irascible affections, ought to be spurred

spurred on the one hand, and restrained on the other, by them.

The rules of morality are therefore not the laws of God, but rules formed by men for their general and usual conduct from a very imperfect knowledge of the laws of God. The laws of God are constant and eternal; the rules of morality are loose and undetermined, varying with the situation, knowledge, and feelings of every man that is subjected to them, and altered and twisted by him in every particular case. They are useful to us as general rules for our conduct, but are altogether inapplicable to particular cases: they serve for the conduct of men's lives, as a general map of the world to navigators, who, besides consulting such a general map for the outlines of their voyage, must attend still more carefully to their observations and reckonings; these they must consult every hour.

Moral writers, who have contended, that the rules of morality are the laws of God, have evidently some appearance of reason;

the rules of morality are the general rules which men have formed for their conduct in life, from their own feelings, and their knowledge of the connection between these feelings and external objects: that is, the general rules that men have formed for their conduct from their knowledge of the laws of physics: they are therefore not the laws of God, but mens copy of them, and the best copy which the authors of the different systems could make. They all approach somewhat to truth, and are infinitely more like the laws of God, than any revelation which has yet been obtruded upon mankind: they are all extremely useful to us as maps are to navigators, but who, to arrive at their port, must consult also particular charts where all the bearings and distances are exactly laid down; and besides, being industrious in making sail, must be very correct in observing, sounding, and reckoning, as they proceed. So man, in his progress through life, must not only understand his moral duties, for the general government of his conduct, but he must

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understand well the particular duties annexed to his profession and occupations, he must work with diligence to perform these duties, and above all, he must observe, sound, and calculate, with the utmost care as he proceeds.

Having thus treated shortly of the duty of man to his Creator, or the worship which God requires from him, we shall now treat of the sins he may commit. It is evident, that the chief sins which we can commit, must be the neglect of some duty which God requires of us. He has given us a more extensive power than any other animal over the works of the creation; it was therefore his will that we should use that power, nor can we sin against him by any act of ours in the exercise of that power, conformably to the laws which he has prescribed to us. Our duties are necessarily circumscribed by our powers: we cannot fly in the air without wings, and the knowledge how to use them; but if we could acquire wings, and such knowledge, and could apply
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it to any useful purpose, it would be a sin against God not to accept of his bounty.

We sin against God either in our thoughts, or our actions. We sin against God in our thoughts, when we are too precipitate in our judgments; when we give too much or too little credit to others, and do not consult sufficiently our own experience and knowledge; when we consider things partially; when we suffer ourselves to be influenced by our passions or desires, or indolence, to conclude hastily, and give a greater or less degree of assent or belief than the proof before us merits. If we are certain of any thing, we are certain that our Creator has given us our reasoning faculties for the purpose of being continually used in all our occupations, and for assisting and directing us in all our conduct: that to use these faculties properly we must compare diligently the whole knowledge, observation, and experience, we are possessed of, relating to every subject we examine, together with the
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lights we derive from the knowledge, experience, or information of others, and must merely give *that* certain degree of assent or belief to the proof before us which the whole merits. Our experience soon teaches us, that after all the pains we can take, and all the caution we can use, we are still extremely subject to error, which necessarily makes us more cautious; we acquire a method of calculating chances, and we believe or disbelieve according to the number of these chances; if we believe or disbelieve in any other proportion, we must be proportionally subject to error, and we must sin against God in proportion as the questions we examine are applicable to and important in our employment.

Our sins against God in our actions, are derived from and flow from our sins against God in our thoughts; our actions arise from our thoughts, and our belief or disbelief of some truths. If we are too credulous, we are rash and precipitate, and fail in our projects in proportion to our credu-

credulity; if we are too incredulous we are slow and inactive, and do not perform the good we might have performed. The failure of our projects and the disappointments which follow, are the punishments which God has inflicted upon mankind for their precipitation and rashness. The contempt of mankind, and a less proportion of the good things of this life than we might otherwise possess, are the natural punishments for slowness and inactivity. Of these two sins mankind are most subject to err on the side of precipitation and rashness, and the punishment is in general much more severe; but happily the author of nature has given us the power of avoiding the penalty of this precipitation and rashness. In every great question that concerns us, we have it generally in our power to ascertain the truth, at least so far as relates to our immediate business, by small experiments, the result of which can be attended with no inconveniency to us; and if we cannot try such experiments, prudence

dence dictates to us that we ought to avoid acting.

Next to the sins we commit against God arising from our credulity and incredulity, man evidently sins most against his Maker by his indolence and idleness: that is, in his using a less active proportion of mental and bodily labour, than is consistent with his health and the improvement of his faculties. The idle man is a rebel against God, who refuses to act the part which has been allotted to him in the creation; and he will infallibly be punished for it with poverty, with the contempt of his fellow citizens, with melancholy and dejection.

We sin equally against God, if by an over-exertion of our faculties we neglect the necessary sleep, the necessary medicines, the necessary aliment, the necessary recreation, and thereby injure or destroy our faculties; and are punished for it with the loss of health, the loss of the use of those faculties, or with death, according to our degree of guilt.

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In the performance of our labour there is a certain degree of order, regularity, and arrangement, which is not only pleasing in itself, but is extremely useful to us, in facilitating and shortening our work. Every species of disorder is therefore a sin against God, in proportion as it impedes ourselves or others in their labour: it produces the effects of idleness, and is punished exactly in the same manner. Even where it does not impede us in our labour, it is still a crime against the Deity, who is evidently a friend to order and beauty; and we are punished for it in some degree, by the uneasy sensations we feel from the disorder we have occasioned.

In our progress through life we observe, not only our own species, but the rest of the animal creation, and every part of unanimated nature, acting its distinct part in the great work of the creation, and preservation of the world, as moved or impelled by the rest of the universe. As there is a necessity for our acting our parts, so there is the same necessity for every other

other part of the universe acting its part. We compose but a very inconsiderable part of the agents employed by the Creator for the support of the world; we bear a less proportion even to this small earth, than the smallest blood vessel or hair does to the human body. As it is manifestly our duty to remove all obstructions to our own useful labour, so we ought to be careful not to throw obstructions in the way of other parts of the creation, by interrupting their labour, unless it is to answer some useful and necessary purpose, for the performance of our own duty: that is, unless it shall be necessary for our own safety or happiness; for the safety or happiness of what we esteem or value; for the order, beauty, and happiness of the world in general. We have so little acquaintance with the rest of the animal creation; we understand so little the nature and importance of the multitude of works which they are perpetually carrying on; we understand so much less of the object and importance of the works performed by the rest of nature, that it is seldom possible for

us either to aid, or obstruct them in their work, unless by mere accident. This part of our duty has therefore seldom been considered by moral writers further than in recommending to us general humanity and tenderness to animals, especially to such as depend on us.

The animal which man is the best acquainted with, and whose labour he understands the best, is man. Our labour and pursuits are nearly the same; we are therefore more exposed to interfere with and obstruct one another, yet the labour of another is as useful as our own; we are the same workmen of God, each in his proper sphere. Two men cannot enjoy the same thing, nor can they perform the same action to obtain it; if they shall attempt it, they necessarily obstruct and interrupt each other; we ought therefore to limit our desires, our pursuits, our occupations, and not suffer them to interfere unjustly with others. There are certain things in man's proper line of conduct which are right for us to perform, and not for others; there are other things which are right for others and not for us;
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we cannot all enjoy the same property: each man is commanded by the law of nature to protect his own life, to pursue his own happiness, to enjoy the full fruits of his own industry; we cannot therefore injure others, or interfere with them in any of these great pursuits, without a crime, without checking and disturbing the proper labour of our fellow workmen.

In general, mankind do infinitely more service than hurt to each other; the light and information they afford one another, and the exchange which they make of their own labour for the labour of others, overbalances the injustice they do one another; and they promote infinitely more than they retard, each other's progress. When they interfere or clash with one another, it is constantly owing to their superficial view of things, and from their ignorance of the laws of nature; when not perceiving their own interest, they prefer a momentary gratification of some present appetite, to permanent advantage.

Men in general are desirous of serving and assisting one another, and they are always

ways ready to do this in some degree ; but as it is not at all times to be done without interference with their own immediate duty, they must necessarily fix some bounds to their humanity and generosity, by the rules of prudence. To ascertain the general occupations of mankind ; to prevent their interfering, clashing, and obstructing one another ; to ascertain how far they are to assist and support, or check and restrain others in their occupations ; how far they ought to limit and circumscribe their own desires and conduct, is the object of morality. The most important part of morality is the laws of justice, whose rules are, or ought to be precise, uniform, and eternal, amongst all mankind ; whereas the other rules of morality must necessarily alter with time, place and circumstances. It is by the laws of justice that we are prevented from obstructing others in their proper duty ; it is by the other rules of morality that we ought to limit our support and assistance to others, that we ought to regulate our pursuits for our own sakes, and independently of others. It is evident, therefore,

fore, that a breach of any of the rules of justice, at the same time that it is, or ought to be punished by the laws of all countries, is also a sin against God; and for the greater breaches of these rules, if we escape punishment from the laws of men, we cannot fail suffering severely from the eternal laws of God, by the horrors we feel, and which always accompany such crimes.

The other rules of morality are useful to us in all our commerce with men, for directing our general conduct towards them; and although these rules are subject to alterations, restrictions, and modifications, in every particular case, yet it is evident they have all a foundation in nature; and the particular application of them can only be discovered by studying the law of nature and of God: all breaches, therefore, of the rules of morality are sins against the Deity, to each of which he has attributed its proper punishment. Every sin we can commit against God is a breach of some moral rule; and a proper system of morals may be considered as a general map of the worship which man owes to his

his Creator, and of the sins we may commit against him.

Having thus traced shortly a few fundamental principles of religion, of which we have as complete evidence as we can have concerning any subject that relates to us, it is well worthy of our enquiry, what the state of our knowledge is concerning some other points of a more dubious nature; among which none seem so important to us as the questions which have arisen concerning a future state. If we are able to throw any light upon this subject, it must be so far satisfactory; if not, we shall be only left in the obscurity we now are.

Mankind have received from nature a strong desire for self-preservation: we are useful in the preservation of the world, and this desire was manifestly given us by the author of our existence, to enable us to support life during a certain period, to answer his purposes. It certainly does not arise from our feeling ourselves happy or contented, and our regret at the interruption of that happiness; otherwise we should regret to go to sleep; on the contrary, mankind

kind in general are not happy, there are few even of those who appear to us in the most desirable situations, who look back at their past lives, and would wish to repeat them; we are all supported with the hope, that our future lives will be more agreeable, and we form a thousand schemes to effect this, such as our imaginations suggest to us, and after all we generally find ourselves deceived. Life is not desirable in itself without hope; when hope leaves us we really wish to die, and most certainly will become our own executioners in spite of any laws of mankind to restrain us. It becomes then fit that we should die; by our death we answer equally with our life the purposes of the author of nature, who has doomed all living animals to death after a certain period. The only inducement God has given to man to live is hope: he has given us hope, to enable us to live out the time allotted to us, with some kind of pleasure; he has given us the power over our own lives to be used only when hope ceases; and not to use that

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power when hope leaves us, is to neglect his bounty.

Hope, or the desire of life, was evidently bestowed upon us by the author of nature, to enable us to act our part during a certain period, conformably to his laws. The frequent examples men had of the death of their best friends, and their constant observation that they died after attaining a certain age, enabled them to foresee their own approaching death, while they were yet in health, and full of hope of seeing joyous and better days: this foresight necessarily rendered them uneasy; anxious for their future state, inquisitive concerning it, and desirous of life even after death. The result of their enquiries was dark and mysterious; they were unacquainted with those laws of nature upon which that future state must depend, and therefore could obtain no light whatever resembling truth: their wishes made them desirous of a future and more happy life, and therefore they were ready to grasp at every pretended revelation from God that should be offered to them,

them, and which promised such a life of happiness. This is evidently the foundation of the different systems of our future state, from the Elysium of the ancients, to the Paradise of Mahomet; nor has any attempt been made to trace our future state from the laws of nature, except in the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration; perhaps if we now knew that doctrine as originally delivered by the propounders of it, we might find it come still nearer the truth.

We find ourselves constantly and gradually changing with the food we eat, and the excrements and perspiration we throw off; our minds are also constantly changing; our appetites, desires, and feelings, never continue long, without a very sensible alteration in them. There is hardly the least likeness in the same person, when he is born and when he becomes a man. In what then consists identity? What distinction would we make when we speak of ourselves or others? It is evident we can mean nothing but a certain chain of ideas,

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which pass through the minds of all animals, and which they are able to retain more or less perfectly by means of their memory; identity, or the same person, consists therefore alone in memory. If, by means of any disease we were to forget all that had happened to us during our life, we should be, with respect to ourselves, altogether a different being, and have as little connection with our former existence as with that of any other person; and if others, from some outward resemblance of what they knew formerly, were to conclude us to be the same person, they would find themselves deceived and mistaken, for we must think, act, and behave to them, in all respects as a different person, who had no knowledge of them whatever.

Memory evidently depends upon the construction of our bodies: it is more or less perfect as our bodies are perfect; we lose it in proportion as our bodies are out of order, and we must necessarily lose it altogether with death. All our senses and faculties, our memory, our reason, must then necessarily cease
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to act that part which had been allotted to them in the works of God, during our respective lives, for the same cause that the blood must cease to flow, and the stomach to digest: but we are not by that change become useless and inactive for the Creator. The instant that death happens new combinations must, by the eternal laws of nature, necessarily take place; and we must continue to act under another form, with other powers, and subject to other laws our respective parts. Thus man and animals, and all animated nature are formed, all offspring of the same common parent, equally useful in the great works of nature, and equally the objects of the bounty of God.

Man therefore is not one simple homogeneous substance, that continues the same, and never changes; he is not one individual thing, but is a composition of an infinite number of different materials, each of which is possessed separately with distinct properties peculiar to itself; these materials are united and combined together with the most wonderful mechanism, so as to produce

duce effects and perform works of God, which they never could have performed separately. Every instant of our lives some part of us separates from us, and returns to join the common mass from which it was drawn, to perform a separate and a distinct duty; and we receive into our compositions, to enable us to act our parts, something foreign to us, and which hitherto had acted a very different part: we are never individually the same one instant; thus men, animals, and all nature are intimately connected, composing merely separate portions of a great whole, which by a kind of circulation are perpetually changing, to act different parts, equally useful to the order and happiness of the universe. Those portions of nature not endued with intelligence, if any such there be, must necessarily act their parts properly; those portions which are endued with intelligence, may possibly introduce some disorder and mischief in the universe, by acting their parts improperly. We perceive distinctly the disorders, we occasion by our own improper conduct;

duct; that this conduct produces pain, misfortune, and unhappiness to ourselves and others: the unhappiness of others is in fact our own unhappiness, as we are all parts of the same whole, and shall be soon placed in situations as foreign to our present situation as others are in respect of us; and in those situations must necessarily partake of the disorders we have before occasioned by our improper conduct. Our present happiness and misery are therefore less important to us than the general happiness and misery of the universe, by so much as eternal duration exceeds momentary duration.

Man's situation in this world exactly resembles that of one amongst the small imperceptible organs which compose the human body; they are all connected together, and draw their materials, their nourishment and juices from one another; the one cannot be diseased or affected without its affecting the whole. If any one of these organs is extirpated, nature has contrived that the rest shall replace it by something analogous to it, and which shall answer the

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the same purposes. If these organs were possessed of intelligence, and had a liberty of action, they must necessarily observe, that their individual existence, comfort, and happiness, depend upon the health, order, and arrangement of the whole body : they would each draw that conclusion from their separate feelings, which we now draw with respect to them ; and would conclude, that it was their interest to sacrifice their particular sensations, and even to suffer extirpation for the general order and happiness of the whole.

The remembrance of our friends, connections, and endearments, which we are so desirous to retain, would be a most intolerable burthen upon us, in our future existence. Were it possible for us to preserve our memory, it would render us altogether unfit to perform our respective tasks of worms, insects, or any one substance, animated or inanimate, which exists in nature, every one of which we may occupy : and even, when in the course of events, we should return again to be men, the memory of what had past in a former life, would

would be a most cruel misfortune to us: what purpose could it answer, but to occasion our regret of such friends, and the loss of such connections as we formerly possessed, and, who existing under other forms, could not associate with us, and must remain for ever unknown to us. Our minds would be engrossed by past events, that could have little or no connection with our new situations, and would be rendered thereby unfit to act in those situations. Suppose a child born with such a memory, it would be altogether unfit for life.

We revolt at the idea of our becoming worms, insects, vegetables, and inanimated matter; but a very superficial examination will convince us, that this is mere prejudice, arising from our situations as men. Some of these we do not know, nor the purposes for which they were intended, we are ignorant how to protect ourselves from them, and are afraid of them, of course we have an antipathy to them, and detest the idea of resembling them. It is evident in their situations we shall have no such prejudice. The other agents of na-

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ture do not act the parts we act, and therefore we think they do not employ themselves properly. They do not enjoy the pleasures we enjoy, and therefore we think them unhappy. We observe our own power over them, of altering and changing them for our purposes, and therefore we think them inferior to us. We are anxious about our own safety and existence, and therefore think ourselves the most important objects in nature; that every thing besides is contemptible and beneath us. Whereas all nature is as active as we are; the employment of all the other agents of nature is equally proper and useful as ours, for the general preservation of the world. If we have power over, and act upon, other things for our purposes, every other thing in nature has power over, and acts upon us, in its turn, for its purposes, and has the same right that we have to attribute to itself the superiority: and we may be assured that every thing in nature, capable of sensation, is as important to itself as we are to ourselves; and that the author of nature has attributed to every animal and
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infect its proper sources of comfort and happiness. Nor can we in the present state of our knowledge presume to say that any one state of life or existence, in all the transformations we are subject to, is preferable to another : or rather we may be assured, that every state is equally desirable in itself, and that the only essential difference between the substances in nature, consists in the degree of perfection with which each is formed, to answer its respective purposes.

Some philosophers have dared to arraign the justice and goodness of God. They have drawn their arguments from the apparent disorder of the world, the misery of mankind, the dangers to which we are exposed, the mischief occasioned by thunder, tempests and earthquakes ; and comparing these effects with their limited ideas of justice and goodness, they could not reconcile these effects with such attributes. They have not perceived that the agents in nature, which are the most pernicious to man, are important powers, capable of producing the most important effects, and certainly

granted by the author of nature, for some very useful purpose, towards the general support and preservation of the world, compared to which, the lives of whole nations of men are as nothing; that the injury they do man, is merely casual; that these powers, immense as they are, are in some shape subject to the direction and control of men, who are capable, with knowledge and wisdom, not only to avoid their pernicious effects, but, in some degree, to apply them to their own immediate use. The Creator has granted us faculties to acquire that knowledge, and if we do not employ them to their proper purpose, it is our own fault; and the incidents and misfortunes to which we are subject, are the proper and adequate punishment of that fault. We have no more right to arraign the Deity for establishing these powers, than we have to complain of him for any of those which we consider as his best gifts. If we make a bad use of them, we must necessarily suffer for it. If we shall, from ignorance, accidentally burn ourselves with a candle, or be killed
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with lightening, we have no right to arraign God.

Divines, who are required by their profession, to argue in support of the justice and goodness of God, having also to maintain the opinion of a future state of rewards and punishments, have thought proper to use the arguments of the philosophers; though for a different conclusion. They have insisted on the prosperity of the wicked, and the inequality of rewards and punishments, proportioned to the merit and demerit of mankind, as strong arguments to prove a future state of retribution, where the former distribution of happiness and misery will be corrected. This system of divines is not just, although it has some foundation in nature. It is not just; for as we have already attempted to show, every virtue has here its proper and adequate reward; every vice its proper and adequate punishment. Their error seems to have arisen in conceiving wealth, honours and power, as things desirable in themselves, unconnected with the use we make of them; whereas they are frequently

quently the cause of our greatest misery. The system of divines has some foundation in nature, in as much, as with death we must instantly survive in some new shape, where we must necessarily derive the reward, or receive the punishment of that happiness or misery, that order or disorder, that discord or harmony, which we and others, and the rest of the universe, have produced in our respective spheres.

If man be merely a part of a great whole ; if we necessarily partake of the happiness and misery which we occasion in the universe ; if every part of nature have its separate task allotted to it by the creator, which is equally useful with our own labour, it would seem to follow, that we ought not to disturb the operations of nature ; that we ought not to give pain to animals ; that we ought not to destroy some, and preserve others ; that we ought not to use animal food : and we accordingly find whole nations abstain from the use of animal food avowedly from religious principles. But these consequences do not follow ; thus far, however, they certainly follow,

low, that we ought not to disturb the operations of nature, without some useful design; that we ought not to make animals suffer pain, unless it is to answer some useful purpose; that we are not to use animal food, unless it is proper nourishment for us.

It is evident, that when the author of nature ordained that many animals should support themselves with vegetable food, he ordained at the same time, that other animals should subsist upon animal food, by giving them stomachs and organs fitted for the digestion of animal food. In fact, most animals that subsist, are doomed, finally, to be devoured by other animals; who, in the act of devouring them, perform a most essential part of their duty to the creator, and assist to preserve the universe in order.

We may form some idea of the beauty and use of this distribution, from something analagous to it, which is perpetually going on in our own bodies. Every part of us, every solid, and every fluid of our bodies, devours and supports itself by consuming some other part. The gall, the chyle,

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chyle, the blood, the muscles, the bones, the brain, would all cease their respective offices, if not supported and nourished from one another, in a regular order; and the food we eat, the air we breathe, the heat we imbibe, supply the deficiency arising from this mutual destruction; and without this constant and regular succession of destruction and regeneration, our whole frame would cease its operation.

Whoever considers these things, must perceive, that the object of the creator, in erecting such a stupendous machine, was not merely to render man and the rest of the animal creation happy and contented; nor was it his wish that we should never suffer pain, anxiety, and misfortunes; if it had been, he would have framed a very different world, subject to different laws. On the contrary, it was manifestly the intention of God, that man should never be contented, but that he should continually pursue some further object of happiness, and thereby perform the task allotted to him. Pleasure and pain are only momentary sensations, and therefore of little importance.

portance in themselves, but they are very important as accessaries, and connected with the frame of animals, who have a particular part to act, for the purpose of directing their conduct to what is right for them to perform; and they are the proper rewards and punishments of our good and bad conduct. The author of nature intended that men and all other animals should suffer pain, anxiety, and misfortunes, for the purpose of suggesting to them their duty, and that they should enjoy satisfaction and happiness in proportion as they discovered his laws, and performed his works.

Quære, Whether the universe, nature, God, are not all one and the same thing; one being, possessing one mind, unchangeable, occupying infinite space, and enduring

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ing through endless time; who perceiving distinctly his own infinite number and extent of parts, or portions of himself, which are of the same intrinsic nature, substance, and importance, and also his own infinite power, has employed that power to conduct those portions of himself in a regular, uniform, and eternal state of circulation and change, from one state or form, to another. Each form of the portions of God, possessing distinct powers and properties, which are limited and circumscribed by every thing around them, or the other portions of God; and reacting again upon those other portions, and limiting and restraining their power, according to regular uniform laws, which God has established, in consequence of the most perfect knowledge of his own purposes, and the best means to execute those purposes; which laws must therefore of necessity be eternal, and perfectly fitted to answer his purposes. The separate portions of God being limited in extent, and therefore composing individually only an infinitely small part of the great whole, or God, although each is equally eternal,

eternal, and equally important to his essence, must of necessity be limited in their power, by their extent, by their form, and organs, fitted for action, communicated to them by the whole, or God : and the perception of these portions of God, of his infinite greatness, of his sublime and wonderful purposes, of the wisdom of his laws to execute those purposes, must also be confined to the parts which they are respectively allotted to act in executing those purposes.

If this is a just idea of the divine essence, the powers of nature are the powers of God, and the laws of nature are the will of God, by which these powers are eternally limited and circumscribed. In considering the universe, or nature, as God, we must not confound the universe with what we call the universe, or that part of it which affects, and is subjected to, our senses and operations, which cannot resemble it either in likeness, or extent : but the universe, such as it exists in nature, independently of man and his feelings, which must of necessity have existed from all eternity ; unchangeable, considered as one whole, as there is no-

thing foreign to it, to create or produce it, and as there is no other power to act upon it, to injure, or destroy it; compared to which, that part of it which is subjected to our senses, or observation, the planetary system, the fixed stars, and their systems, and the immense space between them, is infinitely less than a drop of water, compared with the ocean. Also the small part of the universe, subjected to our senses and reasoning faculties, is evidently in the whole, and in every part of it, like our bodies, in a continual state of alteration, change of position, or circulation, continually acting itself, and acted upon by every other thing around it, or other portions of God; neither the whole, nor any part of it, continuing for one instant of time the individual same thing, but assuming new forms and appearances, and acquiring new powers, and necessarily employing those powers according to the eternal will of God, or the laws of nature and the universe: the whole containing within itself evident marks of original creation, of continual change and alteration, and the seeds of
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what man, in his narrow view of things, calls final death, dissolution, and destruction ; and therefore, according to our ideas, every thing we perceive, must necessarily, in the course of events, at some future period, conformably to the will of the great whole, finally conclude and end. But this final dissolution and destruction of our bodies, of the part of the universe subjected to our senses and observation, and of all things belonging to it, does not annihilate, or in fact, destroy, change, or alter the essential nature of them, or any part of them ; but the whole must necessarily remain under some new form, endued with new powers, subject to the same general and eternal laws, whereby they must, of necessity, act some new part, equally important in the general purposes of God, while the general powers of God remain eternally the same, and while the will of God, manifested by the laws he has established, remains as it now is. If man, and that part of the universe subjected to his senses and understanding, constituting a part of the whole, or God, be susceptible of motion,

motion, or change of place, of acting, and
 being acted upon by every thing about them,
 or other parts of God, of apparent creation,
 alteration, death, and destruction, in conse-
 quence of that action and reaction ; this is
 no imperfection in man, or in any part of
 the universe. Every part of it constituting
 an essential portion of one great whole that
 is eternal, must of necessity be eternal, pos-
 sessing continually the same powers, in pro-
 portion to its extent, and the combinations
 it has formed, and must, of necessity, act
 some new part allotted to it, in the general
 design, according to the will of God, or
 laws of nature ; the apparent creation,
 alteration, death, and destruction, which
 things undergo, being nothing but that
 necessary change of place, combination,
 and organization, which is indispensable to
 fit them to perform their different tasks,
 and to execute the purposes of the whole,
 or God ; and the apparent injustice, dis-
 order, and discord, which these changes
 produce, being nothing but the necessary
 consequence of limited finite beings, such
 as we are, constituting an infinitely small
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part of the essence of God, attempting to contemplate a being of such infinite greatness and wisdom, in the immensity of his designs and works.

The continual motion of bodies, and the alterations which take place in them, concluding with what we call their death, dissolution, or destruction, seem to have been intended by God, for the wisest and best purposes. If any part of God, or nature, were to remain stationary, man, for instance, only acting his part in the universe, and not acted upon by any part of it, nor susceptible of change of place, alteration, or death, he never could perform but one set of duties, applicable to his construction and organs, nor be capable of any improvement, or perceive God, the extent, beauty, and use of his designs, the immensity of his power, and the wisdom of his laws, but in one narrow contracted point of view, fitted to his senses and understanding. Whereas, by the changes which take place in man, during his life, at his death, and afterwards by the dissolution of this earth, of the planetary system, and every thing
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belonging to them, as the smallest particle of which he is composed, cannot possibly be annihilated or destroyed, it must of necessity form new combinations, and new creations must necessarily arise, with new organs and powers, fitted to produce new effects, or answer other purposes of God, and to perceive and contemplate another view of God, or of the universe, applicable to its situation, and the task it is to perform; but as its new situation was created by the destruction of its former appearance and qualities, so it must of necessity again undergo like changes, and conclude its task with the like destruction. And who shall say that man, or the smallest part of man, or of the universe, may not, in the course of events, during the eternal existence of God, and every portion of God, or nature, perform every part of the work of God, perceive the whole intentions, exercise the whole power, and possess, in the course of endless time, the whole wisdom of God. If this idea of God, and the parts of God, is just, the only difference between them must consist in time and space, God occupying

cupying infinite space, perceiving, designing, and executing every instant of time; what the parts of God can only occupy, perceive, design, and execute, in the course of eternity: time and space, eternity of duration and extent, being terms of relation, by which we distinguish between God and his parts, or portions, the proper spheres of action of each, and the alterations and changes they undergo, and which would have no meaning but for these alterations and changes, of which they are the measure. It seems little more difficult to understand how the whole of the universe should compose one being, one mind, one God, possessed of the whole knowledge, wisdom, and power of nature, perceiving, forming, and executing all his designs, upon his own parts within himself, than to understand what certainly is, that man, consisting of an infinite number of distinct and separate parts, all of them fitted with proper organs for perception and action, in their proper spheres, and supported, nourished, and living upon one another, continually throwing off their old
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materials, and imbibing and nourishing themselves with their proper food, or new materials ; yet that all these heterogeneous beings, or parts of man, are so connected and linked together, as to form only one distinct being, or mind, perceiving objects, understanding things, forming designs, and executing them, as compelled by the general form, or construction of the whole body, and the general laws of nature, or God, to which that construction is subject. If man cannot perceive the infinite number of operations which are perpetually going on in his body, nor understand the connection, design, and principles, upon which these operations depend, which are so important to him that he could not subsist a moment without them, it is merely because he did not form himself, nor the powers, and universal laws upon which his existence depends : yet man constituting an infinitely-small part of the divine essence, acts like God himself in all the voluntary motions which he performs with the different parts of his body ; he perceives, with some degree of accuracy,

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his own powers ; he understands, in part, the general law of God, and forms his own plans and designs, and executes them in his proper sphere of action, with as much wisdom as is necessary for the general purposes of his existence. But after the utmost attention, labour, and skill of man, to execute his purposes, his work must ever be imperfect, when compared with the work of the whole, or God, in proportion as the limited knowledge of man falls short of the perfect knowledge of God ; and this seems to be the wise reason why God has removed from men all knowledge of the most important matters to them ; of the numberless fine subtle operations which are perpetually going on in their bodies, which are essentially necessary for their life, health ; and happiness, on which depend the digestion of their food, the motion of the heart and lungs, the rejection of excrementitious substances ; that by their interference they may not spoil or derange, what is so much better conducted by the operations of the whole, or God.

F I N I S.

